



**The American Academy**

*Together, let's do something about it.™*

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[www.NoDropouts.com](http://www.NoDropouts.com)

## **Supporting Dropout Recovery Programs**

The purpose of this legislation is to create a framework for dropout recovery programs that provides school districts with the flexibility required to effectively serve students who, for a variety of reasons, have already dropped out or who are at-risk of dropping out of school. Included in HB 5267/SB 969 are accountability measures designed to ensure that funding is available based on measurable student performance.

### **HB 5267/SB 969:**

- Allows school districts to directly work with a dropout recovery expert organization.
- Defines "dropout recovery program" to include all effective formats- including online, brick-and-mortar, and hybrid programs in the definition.
- Ties funding of dropout recovery programs to monthly performance rather than October and February count periods.
- Creates 12 monthly enrollment periods to allow students to resume their education when they are ready.
- Requires dropout recovery programs to follow nationally-accepted, research-based best practices rather than focusing exclusively on best practices in pure distance learning, including requiring annual learning plans, provision of a local mentor who provides social advocacy, and monthly evaluations of student progress.

### **The American Academy:**

- Currently works with Michigan school districts to give dropouts and other at-risk students within the district the flexibility, accountability, and support needed to get back in school and back on track to graduate.
- Partners with local MI districts in a budget-neutral manner and doesn't take money away from other programs or students.
- Provides certified teachers, experienced administrators, local student advocates, online mentors, and online tutors available 24x7, to support students as they work through online curriculum aligned to Michigan Merit standards.
- Follows nationally-accepted research-based best practices in dropout recovery by partnering with local school districts and providing a combination of academic and social supports for returning dropouts.



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**Today, more than 150,000 high school-age Michigan teens have left school without earning a diploma.** Research shows that as many as 80% of the kids who leave school leave for non-academic reasons: they leave because they must work to support themselves or their families, they have become parents and don't have child care options, they've been bullied, they are "too far behind" to graduate on time and have been counseled out of school, they've been asked to leave because of gang involvement or other disruptive behavior. They simply cannot or will not attend traditional facility-based programs.

**Dropouts understand the importance of a high school diploma.** In our experience, more than 90% of the students The American Academy (TAA) is able to find on behalf of partner district re-enroll in their home district when they are offered a program that gives them the flexibility to balance the demands of their lives with the demands of their education. HB 5267/SB 969 establishes a seat-time waiver for returning dropouts and creates monthly entry points that allow students to come back to school when they are ready.

**Simply giving students a username and password is not an effective dropout recovery practice.** In a 2009 report commissioned by the Texas Education Agency on effective dropout recovery practices, 22 categories of effective practice were identified. These practices focus on program administration, student recruiting, academic strategies, college/career strategies, and mentoring and coaching. Online learning can be an effective academic strategy for dropout recovery, but *\*only\** when it is offered in a context of the other practices, including robust accountability and support. HB 5267/SB 969 enables districts to offer flexible dropout recovery programs - alone or in partnership with dropout recovery organizations - and requires dropout recovery programs to align with national best-practices that are critical for student success.

**Education is a significant economic driver.** According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, an additional 1,000 graduates in Michigan could contribute \$1.2MM *annually* to the state budget. Compare this economic boost to the average dropout who costs the state \$300,000 in social services, incarceration, and lost income from taxes over his or her lifetime.

**Funding success.** In this time of economic crisis, allocating funding to new programs with increased accountability and pay-for-performance requirements is wise financial management. HB 5267/SB 969 divides public education funding into twelve equal tranches. In this model, districts receive payment only for the months in which students are active in the program and meet the requirements for funding.